

ESF Gender Equality Plan

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Introduction

ESF's excellence lies within the performance, dedication, professionalism, innovation, competencies, and capabilities of its staff. Aligning with the [New ERA for Research and Innovation objectives](#), the [EU Gender Equality Strategy \(2020-2025\)](#), and the [Ljubljana Declaration on Gender Equality in Research and Innovation](#), the ESF has developed a Gender Equality Plan (GEP) to reinforce its commitment to an inclusive, diverse, dynamic and innovative culture in Research and Innovation, and mainstreams gender equality (GE) with an intersectional approach (Gender⁺) at all institutional levels and practices.

In doing so, the ESF takes a stance to address crucial gender-related issues which have not only limited the potential of individuals to contribute to science but also the fulfilment of scientific objectives throughout the years and at global level. As gender equality is leaving the realm of 'optional matters' to become a *sine qua non* condition to properly implement research and research-related processes, the promotion of gender equality is less represented by isolated actions and increasingly mainstreamed at all levels of the new European framework.

The ESF GEP acknowledges and intends to act upon important limiting factors at play on the European scene such as the *Leaky Pipeline* (the drop in representation of women along career progression), the *Glass Ceiling* (limiting women's progression on the hierarchical ladder), or the *Matilda Effect* (the bias against acknowledging the achievements of women scientists), as well as broader gender-based inequalities including the Gender Pay Gap and Gender-Based Violence. These are understood as going against the values of ESF and the vision and commitment of the European Union towards upholding the rights of all its citizens to equal treatment and opportunities.

Within its national context, the ESF GEP also aligns with the objectives and ambition of the French Republic to promote gender equality and advance women's rights, expressed by way of its diverse action plans on gender equality and diversity, equality in the workplace², and violence against women including harassment in the workplace. In the field of scientific research and innovation, the French Republic has aligned its objectives to the European Union ones, including the promotion of greater representation of women and girls in scientific domains where they are traditionally less represented, such as Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM). These objectives have been embraced by leading French research institutions (i.e., CNRS, ANR), and ESF is actively joining the movement by adopting an action plan on gender equality. This endeavour, aligned with ESF's Code of Conduct, is further embedded in ESF's new strategy as well as in the role ESF plays via its various activities.

ESF's GEP ambitiously covers all the Building Blocks and Recommended Areas brought forth by the European Commission in the frame of Horizon Europe, but it also goes a step further by integrating an intersectional approach, in line with its far-reaching ambition to keep its important position in strengthening European research and assure a continuous development of the state-of-the-art of gender equality in Europe and beyond.

I. Goals

The goals of the ESF GEP are set to address short-term (over the GEP timeframe of 2023 - 2025) and long-term perspectives (over the next 10 years):

Short term goals / objectives of the GEP

- To build and support a sustainable Gender Equality framework for ESF
- To maintain a work environment where diversity is embraced, and all forms of discriminations are fought against
- To be recognized as an institution following a zero-tolerance approach to gender-based violence
- To attract and retain the best talents possible, and harness their skills
- To promote the presence of women in decision-making positions
- To prepare the institution for future challenges, to remain competitive
- To raise awareness on the importance of including the gender dimension in research content and research management

Long term goals of ESF on gender equality and diversity

- Being a leading European institution in developing the state-of-the-art of gender equality in science and innovation.
- Being a role model in the promotion of gender equality and diversity in scientific research assessment
- Being a key partner and contributing to the implementation of an innovative and inclusive agenda for science at European level.
- Being an organisation recognized for providing an advanced, dynamic, reliable, ethical setting for all its activities.

II. Implementation principles

Organisational aspects and dedicated resources

The GEP Team will be tasked with the implementation of the Gender Equality Plan. It will be composed of the Gender Equality Working Group (GEWG) Lead, together with a member of the GEWG with theoretical and practical expertise in promoting and implementing gender equality actions. Ensuring GE across the organisation is fully under the perimeter and responsibility of Human Resources (HR), therefore and in order for the implementation to be better integrated in ESF process, the HR representative will oversee the activity of the GEP team. The GEP Team has a shared role in leading the implementation of the GEP together with the ESF management, and in particular the HR manager for all actions in this field.

Training and awareness raising

Gender expertise is understood both as a means and as an end to implement the GEP. ESF commits to advance in-house awareness and knowledge of gender issues by all staff members and enable adequate 'technical' training for staff whose specific attributions/roles require such training, i.e., HR, harassment contact person, staff representatives. Training will be provided by staff members with relevant expertise on a regular basis, including the members of the Gender Equality Working Group, while professional training requiring external support will be based on needs.

Training needs at different levels will be regularly assessed by the GEP Team and HR, to ensure timely and adequate planning (including financial) over the years of the GEP implementation.

Regular Info Sessions for all ESF staff on specific gender equality related subjects (e.g., gender biases, gender-based violence) are integrated into the GEP to mainstream the general issue of gender equality into institutional awareness and beyond.

Data Collection and Monitoring

Gender-disaggregated data will be collected *via* strong cooperation between the GEP Team and the Human Resources officer. The former will provide strategic guidance and recommendations on how to best approach gender/diversity disaggregated data collection, while the latter will be instrumental in providing key data for regular monitoring and evaluation.

The implementation of the GEP will be monitored on a regular basis, and an annual evaluation and its corresponding report will be prepared and presented to the ESF staff by the GEP Team. A synthesized version of the evaluation report will be made available on the ESF institutional website.

III. Strategic Areas

The GEP actions will promote change in the following strategic areas:

- Institutional commitment
- Organisational culture and work-life balance
- Gender equality in recruitment and career progression
- Measures against gender-based violence including sexual harassment
- Integration of the gender/diversity dimension into research content evaluation
- Promotion of gender balance in leadership, committees, EC projects and events

These were identified as relevant for the ESF in particular, in connection to its current setting and activities, and for the promotion of a gender equal science overall.

1. Institutional commitment

ESF is committed to promoting a gender equal working environment and contributing to the improvement of inclusivity and diversity in the Research and Innovation landscape. ESF institutional commitment is supported by dedicating the needed resources for the implementation, monitoring and sustainability of the actions leading to Gender Equality and Diversity at ESF and its networks.

- **Objective 1.1:** Support the existence of a sustainable GE framework
- **Objective 1.2:** Openly communicate support and commitment towards GE and Diversity

2. Organisational culture and work-life balance

ESF aims at implementing and cultivating a healthy and gratifying work environment by putting in place measures/actions that benefit its employees and offers them the support needed to carry out their activities in a fulfilling way.

- **Objective 2.1:** Promote awareness in organisational culture and formal/informal behaviours
- **Objective 2.2:** Promote a healthy work-life balance setting for all employees

3. Gender equality in recruitment and career progression

ESF pays attention to the gender and diversity balance of the workplace and aims at reducing the staff turnover by offering competitive working conditions and possibility for career development for all levels.

- **Objective 3.1:** Promote a fair and unbiased recruitment
- **Objective 3.2:** Support skills development and diversification
- **Objective 3.3:** Address gender stereotypes and clustering in specific job positions

4. Measures against gender-based violence including sexual harassment

ESF recognizes that Gender-Based Violence (GBV) is a pervasive issue affecting women disproportionately, and that it is grounded in historically unequal power relations between women and men. It further acknowledges the multiple forms and long-lasting impacts of violence on the well-being and productivity of individuals, as well as on institutional culture and image.

- **Objective 4.1:** Institutional commitment towards a zero-tolerance policy on harassment and discrimination, both inside and outside the organization
- **Objective 4.2:** Clearly defined and communicated procedures to deal with harassment cases
- **Objective 4.3:** Ensure the presence of relevant expertise in gender-based violence

5. Integration of the gender/diversity dimension into research content evaluation

ESF acknowledges that the production of science is not neutral and that it may be impacted upon (in terms of methodology, content, focus) by multiple factors of discrimination, including gender. It therefore takes a forward-thinking approach in trying to redress this issue *via* one of its core activities that is Grant Evaluation.

- **Objective 5.1:** Raise awareness of biases for the ESF staff involved in Grant Evaluation
- **Objective 5.2:** Raise awareness of biases for externals involved in Grant Evaluation
- **Objective 5.3:** Include the assessment of gender dimension in research content in Grant Evaluation services

6. Promotion of gender balance in leadership, committees, EC projects and events

ESF wants to promote the equal representation of women and men in its activities and in positions of visibility and decision-making, conscious that equal representation is instrumental in creating balanced, dynamic and complementary teams, and that it contributes to bringing forward societal representation and expectations connected to power holding.

- **Objective 6.1:** Promote gender balance and diversity in ESF leadership positions and board membership
- **Objective 6.2:** Promote gender balance in Grant Evaluation
- **Objective 6.3:** Promote gender equality in ESF-hosted committees and EC-coordinated project consortia
- **Objective 6.4:** Promote gender balance at events organized by ESF

IV. Monitoring and Evaluation

The objective of the monitoring and evaluation framework is to oversee the implementation of the GEP activities, and identify areas where efforts need to be increased or strategies modified to better reach the set targets. Importantly, it will serve as an accountability mechanism for all actors involved in the GEP implementation and as a tool for observing institutional change. The monitoring and evaluation framework of the ESF GEP will be composed of systematic data collection and analysis, associated to regular reporting and external advice based on evaluation results

Gender-disaggregated data will be collected for several indicators, such as gender per job category and gender per promotion occurrence among others.

An *annual report* will be developed by the GEP Team. The evaluation will cover achievements of the objectives through: meeting of the KPIs; potential delays and obstacles in meeting these; identification of mitigation and redress strategies in connection to the latter; identification of resources needed; overall appraisal of the institutional environment and its conduciveness for the further implementation of the GEP (i.e., positive trends and substantial change, resistance and backlash); identification of potential amendments needed to the GEP to cover areas not initially identified; collection of employees experiences.